Adding a well-placed flare to your photo can take an ordinary photo and really make it magical, adding a dream like, sometimes ethereal look to your photo. But this can be a tricky thing to achieve, especially to do it well. At the very simplest level, a flare occurs when a direct, hard light source hits the glass of your camera's lens. Flares vary in look depending on the intensity of the light, from what direction that light comes from and your lens.

The intensity and direction of the light will give you a flare. One of the most common flares, which as you start taking more and more photos you are bound to see, is when taking photos with the sun in your frame or just outside of your frame. Typically a flare will show up as a little green dot floating around your frame. Now, this isn't the kind of flare we are trying to achieve but this is a flare.

An easier ways to see this is to take a flashlight or light on your phone and hold it around the edge of your lens. Now as you move the light around your lens, moving it closer or farther, you can see the flare change. Now using a flashlight will give you one kind of flare and a specific color of flare and can be a fun thing to play with.

The other important factor here is the lens. Every lens will give you a different looking flare, some will have much more defined lines while others will have multi-colored rainbows. One reason people love old vintage glass is because of how they flare, they have more texture and more interesting flares. Also, make sure to have your aperture wide open,

ideally with a lens that is f/1.4 to maximize the size of the flare so you don't have just a small dot floating around your frame. Beyond all this though, how do we achieve that beautiful flare.

Most commonly, we want to take that sunset photos with a beautiful golden flare framing our subject. The easiest way to achieve this is to backlight your subject with the sun as its setting, placing them between you and the sun. Ideally have the sun just above them or to the side but you will need the sun fairly low on the horizon to really get the best effect. From there, move around, play with the position of the sun while also paying attention to where your subject is and how the flare frames them. You want to draw attention to you subject and not have the flare be overly distracting.

Flares are a great way to make your photos stand out and really add that dreamlike quality to them. The most important thing is to practice taking them, being set up in the right location to get both the composition you want and the sun in the right place to get the best flare possible.